In the claims:

1. (Amended) A method comprising:

collecting usage information, from one or more smart devices in a common environment by a computer coupled to the one or more smart devices , wherein the usage information comprises statistical data regarding the specific use of the one of more smart devices;

storing the usage information in a memory associated with the computer;

periodically accessing a remote database by the computer, the remote database containing information specific to the one or more smart devices, the computer accessing the remote database to:

transmit the usage information to the remote database, and

receive the information specific to the one or more smart devices from the remote database; and

transmitting a control signal from the computer to the one or more smart devices, the control signal being generated by the computer based on the information received from the remote database, wherein the control signal functionally operates the one or more smart devices.

2. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the usage information comprises one or more of:

an average length of time the one or more smart devices has been in operation over a period of time;

a number of occasions the one or more smart devices has been in operation over the period of time;

a number of times maintenance was performed on the one or more smart devices over the period of time; and

types of maintenance operations that were performed on the one or more smart devices over the period of time.

3. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the remote database is accessed by the computer via an internet connection.

4. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the remote database is accessed by the computer via a point-to-point connection between the computer and the remote database.

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6. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

updating the information contained in the remote database specific to the one or more smart devices by a manufacturer of the one or more devices.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more smart devices include at least one home appliance and wherein the common environment is a house.

8. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more smart devices comprise manufacturing equipment and wherein the common environment is a manufacturing facility.

10. (Amended) A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions, which, when executed, cause a computer to:

collect usage information from one or more smart devices operating in a common environment , wherein the usage information comprises statistical data regarding the specific use of the one of more smart devices;

store the usage information in a memory associated with the computer;

periodically access a remote database, wherein the remote database contains information specific to the one or more smart devices;

transmit the usage information to the remote database;

receive the information specific to the one or more smart devices from the remote database; and

transmitting a control signal from the computer to the one or more smart devices, the control signal being generated by the computer based on the information received from the remote database , wherein the control signal functionally operates the one or more smart devices.

11. (Amended) The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the stored instructions, when executed, further cause the computer to:

receive an identifier of a smart device when the smart device is initially installed in the common environment; and

store the identifier in such a way that it becomes associated with usage information collected from the device.

13. (Amended) The computer readable medium of claim 11, wherein the usage information collected from the smart device comprises one or more of:

an average length of time the smart device has been in operation over a period of time;

a number of occasions the smart device has been in operation over the period of time;

a number of times maintenance was performed on the smart device over the period of time; and

types of maintenance operations that were performed on the smart device over the period of time.

17. (Amended) The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the one or more smart devices include at least one home appliance and wherein the common environment is a house.

18. (Amended) The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the one or more smart devices comprise manufacturing equipment and wherein the common environment is a manufacturing facility.

20. (Amended) A system comprising:

a computer controller having a memory, the computer controller being coupled to each of a plurality of smart devices in a common environment;

a remote database that contains sets of information specific to each of the plurality of smart devices;

a transmission line coupled to the remote database and to the computer controller for data transmissions therebetween; and

a software program stored in the memory, execution of the software program directing the computer controller to periodically access the remote database to transmit usage information received from the plurality of smart devices to the remote database wherein the usage information comprises statistical data regarding the specific use of the plurality of smart devices, and also to receive the sets of information specific to the plurality of smart devices from the remote database, the software program further causing the computer controller to transmit control signals to the plurality of smart devices based on the sets of information received from the remote database , wherein the control signals functionally operate the plurality of smart devices.

21. (Unchanged) The system of claim 20, wherein the devices comprise home appliances and entertainment equipment.

23. (Amended) The system of claim 20, wherein each of the plurality of smart devices includes an identifier and wherein the computer controller accesses a record in the remote database that contains information specific to one of the plurality of smart devices by transmitting the identifier.